

THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION OF INDO-CHINA

of the School's twentieth anniversary it was the object of violent criticism. Opponents claimed that its Director and teaching staff had never been nearer to Indo-China or Africa than their offices in the Colonial Ministry. Students fenced, swam, and rode horseback, as preparation for a career from which they could not be ejected even if they proved to be incompetent. Once in the colonies, these graduates formed a clique which scorned and was scorned by officials who had risen from the ranks, to the general detriment of the colony which they had been sent to serve. No one wanted the School to disappear, but only to mend its ways, which at the time seemed to be the last of its desires.

Competence in native languages was a most serious void in functional training, even at the Colonial School. Beau and Klobukowsky had frequently denounced this defect, but not until it was voiced in the budget reports of Messimy and Violette did this criticism percolate into Metropolitan consciousness. The first Frenchman in the country had encountered almost insurmountable obstacles in learning the language without the aid of dictionaries, lexicons, and interpreters.

The natives could say what could be pointed to, but did not grasp or indicate abstract ideas. Missionaries were the pioneers in this field, and their accomplishment showed what perseverance could do. The first governors realized how important were the contacts between races and the importance of language in this regard. But it was part of the assimilationist creed that it was easier for some millions of natives to learn French than for a few thousand Frenchmen to learn Annamite. Since the school system was unable to afford the

native masses a
 chance to learn French, inducements were offered to
 functionaries to
 make some linguistic efforts themselves. This was
 quite ineffective,
 for the premiums were not large, and Annamite is one
 of the world's
 most difficult languages. Graduates of the Colonial
 School had been
 trained in the rudiments of Annamite, but practice was
 lacking. Those
 who studied Annamite might be assigned to Cambodia,
 or given office
 work that only required them to speak French, so the
 reward of such
 effort was negligible. Nor did magistrates who rotated
 from one colony
 to another, often at two-year intervals, find it worth
 their while to try
 dispensing with an interpreter's services. The trend
 towards deeur
 trafettion threw an emphasis on provincial office-
 holding, which gave
 renewed life to the whole language piobteca. Sawraut's
 sincere efforts
 to stiffen the language requirements, for entry and
 promotion in the
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